

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAN JO 01628 140740Z
ACTION L-03

INFO OCT-01 ARA-14 ISO-00 SS-15 EUR-12 CA-01 CIAE-00
INR-10 NSAE-00 NSC-05 JUSE-00 SEC-01 /062 W
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P R 132006Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0785
INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
AMEMBASSY MANAGUA
AMEMBASSY PANAMA
AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

UNCLAS SAN JOSE 1628

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT)

E.O. 11/52: N/A
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CS
SUBJECT: VESCO CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION: JOSE FIGUERES DECLARES
BEFORE CIVIL REGISTRY

REF: A) SAN JOSE 1545 (NOTAL), B. SAN JOSE 924

1. EX-PRESIDENT JOSE FIGUERES DECLARED IN FAVOR OF ROBERT
VESCO'S CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION AT CIVIL REGISTRY ON
12 APRIL. FIGUERES' PUBLIC DECLARATION WAS WIDELY COVERED
BY LOCAL MEDIA. IT INCLUDED FOLLOWING POINTS:
A. ON THE QUESTION OF VESCO'S GOOD CONDUCT: "THIS IS ONE
OF THE MOST IMPORTANT QUESTIONS FOR ME. I INVESTIGATED
MR. VESCO'S CASE AS BEST I COULD IN THE US. NO ONE WAS
ABLE TO ASSURE ME THAT HE HAS BEEN JUDGED FOR CRIMES OF
ANY TYPE. WHAT HAS OCCURRED AGAINST HIM THERE AND HERE IS
WHAT I CALL TRIALS BY THE PRESS WHICH INVOLVE A LOT OF
POLITICS."
B. ON THE DECLARATION THAT APPEARED IN THE NEW REPUBLIC
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LAST APRIL THAT VESCO CONTRIBUTED TO THE 1974 POLITICAL
CAMPAIGN IN COSTA RICA: "IN THE FIRST PLACE I DID NOT
WRITE THE NEW REPUBLIC ARTICLE. IT WAS RECONSTRUCTED
FROM AN INFORMAL CONVERSATION I HAD WITH THE AUTHOR
WHILE HE WAS IN SAN JOSE SURROUNDED BY NEWSMEN WHO HAVE
CONTINUOUSLY ATTACKED VESCO FOR POLITICAL REASONS."
FIGUERES CONTINUED THAT VESCO IN 1973-74 WAS "A

YOUNG MAN IN A STRANGE COUNTRY WHO MET UP WITH POLITICIANS WHO INCESSANTLY ASKED HVU FOR MONEY CONTRIBUTIONS WITHOUT CLARIFYING THAT THIS IS PROHIBITED BY LAW." IN THE 1978 CAMPAIGN, FIGUERES STATED, VESCO REALIZED THE PROHIBITION "AND ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD NOT PARTICIPATE IN OUR POLITICAL PROCESS UNTIL HE BECAME A COSTA RICAN CITIZEN. I HAVE NOT KNOWN OF ANY PARTICIPATION (BY HIM) IN POLITICS".

C. VESCO'S WHEREWITHAL: FIGUERES DECLARED THAT VESCO HAS ENOUGH MONEY TO MAINTAIN HIS FAMILY "AND TO HELP OTHERS." HE SAID HE KNEW OF MANY OF MR. AND MRS. VESCO'S CHARITY CONTRIBUTIONS, INCLUDING PAYMENT FOR MEDICAL SERVICES THAT SAVED PEOPLES' LIVES.

D. ON THE CONDUCT OF VESCO AND HIS FAMILY IN COSTA RICA: "AN EXAMPLE OF MODERATION, CONSIDERING THE BAD THINGS SAID ABOUT HIM IN THE MEDIA . . . HE RESISTS THESE ATTACKS WITH STOICISM, BUT HIS POOR WIFE AND CHILDREN FIND LIFE VERY HARD HERE . . . MR. VESCO IS A GENEROUS FATHER TO HIS FAMILY, HE IS A CHARITABLE PERSON . . . HE IS A SOBER BUSINESSMAN . . . HE ONLY DRINKS ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES IN SMALL QUANTITIES . . ."

2. IN DECLARATIONS TO PRESS AS HE LEFT CIVIL REGISTRY, FIGUERES REPORTEDLY STATED THAT IT WOULD BE AN INJUSTICE NOT TO DECLARE IN FAVOR OF VESCO. THE EX-PRESIDENT ALSO CITED COSTA RICA'S TRADITIONAL HOSPITALITY
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IN RECEIVING IMMIGRANTS, AND RECITED FROM MEMORY THE INSCRIPTION AT THE FOOT OF THE STATUE OF LIBERTY ("GIVE ME YOUR TIRED . . .").

3. ACCORDING TO LOCAL LEGAL CONTACTS THE OFFICIAL NOTICE OF VESCO'S CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION WILL PROBABLY BE PUBLISHED NEXT WEEK. THE TEN-DAY PERIOD ALLOWED FOR OPPONENTS TO PRESENT THEIR ARGUMENTS AGAINST VESCO'S CITIZENSHIP APPLICATION BEGINS THE DAY THE NOTICE IS PUBLISHED.

4. ACTION REQUESTED: RESPONSE TO SAN JOSE 1545 REQUESTED SOONEST.
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